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SUBJECT Harder Line on Security Leaks at Pentagon

FRANK SCOTT: It was probably not generally noticed in the constant flood of news about two weeks, but Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci wrote a memo in which he said, "It will be the policy of this department to deal firmly and promptly with all employees who betray their responsibility to protect secrets."

It should have come as little surprise to close observers of Mr. Carlucci. As Deputy Director of the CIA, he was known to take a very hard line on security leaks.

Carlucci's memo notes that past disclosures have damaged our relations with other governments, reduced our lead in weapons technology, and resulted in the loss of irreplaceable intelligence sources.

We applaud Mr. Carlucci's call. We have been concerned for years about the growing trend towards security leaks, and with the apparent apathy with which they have been regarded by recent Administrations.

Since the Daniel Ellsberg case, such leaks have been treated by most Administrations as if they are a cost of doing business. Ellsberg, you'll remember, was responsible for leaking major classified information known as the Pentagon Papers to The New York Times. Apparently, he leaked the information because of political and societal differences. He was put on trial. But those notorious Nixon White House plumbers broke into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office to steal Ellsberg's records. In the process, they caused Ellsberg's day in court to be called a mistrial. He got off scot-free, while they, quite rightfully, all went to jail.

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But somehow it came into vogue for all of us to consider Ellsberg and others like him to be heroes. In the process, this country's interests were severely damaged, as was the security of every American citizen. Agents across the world blew their cover. Some were assassinated. So were a couple of ambassadors. All because Ellsberg imitators were leaking information almost faster than it could be classified.

It was done, in our opinion, in the same spirit that John Hinckley sought immortality by attempting to assassinate President Reagan. It isn't social justice that these people represent. It isn't First Amendment rights, either. What they represent is treason. And what their motives are, God only knows. They could be anything from a twisted sense of social justice to the cause of an enemy power.

But one thing is sure. The damage they do affects every last one of us. And we can only hope that Mr. Carlucci's effort is just the first of many which need to be taken to bring a halt of such practices.